

# **CSCE NEWS RELEASE**

## **Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

234 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6460  
Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, Chairman  
Rep. Christopher Smith, Co-Chairman

Contact: Chadwick R. Gore  
1-202-225-1901  
e-mail: CGORE@HR.HOUSE.GOV

## **Commission Co-Chairs Express Concern About Developments in Albania**

**For Immediate Release  
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**Contact: Chadwick R. Gore  
(202) 225-1901**

**Washington, DC**—Commission Chairman Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-C-NY) and Co-Chairman Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) today released the following statement regarding the declaration of a state of emergency by the Government of Albania:

"The declaration of a State of Emergency in Albania by the country's President, Sali Berisha, is of great concern to us. We have watched developments in Albania with growing concern since the start of public unrest over the collapsed pyramid schemes. We call upon President Berisha and the Government of Albania to adhere strictly to the rule of law. Doing otherwise will lead to gross violations of human rights, damage Albania's prospects for democratic and free market reform, and cost Albania vital international support, with lasting negative consequences for Albania and its people. Under no circumstances should the current crisis be misused to enhance political power.

"We also remind the Albanian Government of its commitments in the OSCE, specifically in the 1990 Copenhagen document, which 'confirm that any derogations from obligations relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms during a state of public emergency must remain strictly within the limits provided for by international law,... especially with respect to rights from which there can be no derogation,... [and] measures derogating from obligations will be limited to the extent strictly required

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The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe by law monitors and encourages progress in implementing the provisions of the Helsinki Accords. The Commission, created in 1976, is made up of nine Senators, nine Representatives and one official each from the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense. For more information about the Commission, please call (202) 225-1901.

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by the exigencies of the situation.’

“A country’s legitimate authorities must take action to maintain civil order and prevent violence on the streets—such as in the case of the Adriatic port city of Vlore—but these authorities must respect human rights and the rule of law. The restrictions Albania has placed on, and actual harassment of, journalists, as well as reported limits on political activity in Albania, violate these commitments. Moreover, we fear that orders given to security forces regarding crowd dispersal will lead to innocent people being seriously injured, if not killed.

“Of course, beyond the immediate concerns of order, there are the larger problems in Albania’s democratic development that continue to need attention. The lack of judicial independence, and marred elections—like those of May 1996 which produced a large majority for the ruling Democratic Party—are unhealthy for any democracy. These problems may, in fact, have contributed to the current political crisis. There needs to be, on the part of the authorities, considerable self-examination, tolerance of criticism, and good will in making corrections. The opposition forces also need to avoid exacerbating the crisis with unnecessary provocation. All must avoid further violence.

“We will continue to watch the situation closely, and strongly urge the Albanian Government, including President Berisha, to act responsibly and accept accountability. If this does not happen, Albania will lose international support, with severe economic and political consequences. While Albanian democratic development must labor to overcome the trauma of decades of the most ruthless Communist rule, past abuses are no excuse for violations in the present situation.

“We have been patient in our desire to see democratic change. The international community, particularly in the OSCE, must insist on Albania’s full adherence to freely undertaken human rights commitments.